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ABSTRACT

Our failure to give students an adequate education in national and global concerns creates low political participation and general cynicism. International exchanges in education can illuminate the connections between world events and the day-to-day lives of students and teachers. Brookdale Community College (BCC) in New Jersey sponsors a program in Ecuador's largest city of Guayaquil which allows Ecuadorian natives a quality college-level education in English and Spanish, and gives American students and faculty the opportunity to learn about Ecuadorian culture, history, and business. The Brookdale/Guayaquil (BCC/G) campus has an enrollment of about 250 Ecuadorian students, 50 American students, and 15 faculty members. Enrolled Latin American students can earn up to 45 semester hours and can obtain an associate's degree by completing the last 15 credits at Brookdale's New Jersey campus, the University of South Carolina, Edison State College of New Jersey, or other schools. Fifty Ecuadorians have graduated from colleges in the United States since the program began in 1984. BCC/G also serves as host to the "Partnership for Service Learning," an international program where students live with local families, study local culture, and volunteer in community service and development projects. Brookdale faculty members also offer classes for Ecuadorian elementary and secondary teachers to strengthen curriculum development and teaching skills. (KP)

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TODAY'S DEMANDS FOR GLOBAL AWARENESS: THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DIMENSION

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October, 1994

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American Education and Issues of Global Awareness

Conflicts in Africa and in the Caribbean...CNN transmissions of sporting events...international health conferences...natural disasters around the world...the price of coffee and oil...three-hour flights from New York to Paris...stores in the United States, Nigeria, and Ecuador stocked with goods made in the Philippines, Mexico, China, Germany and Japan. These and innumerable other examples of our interconnections with peoples and events around the world have made the words "interdependence","multiculturalism", and "globalism" three of this decade's most important words.

As Pico Ayer described this phenomenon in a Fall, 1993 essay in Time Magazine:

> In ways that were hardly conceivable even a generation ago,the new world order is a version of the New World writ large: a wide-open frontier of polyglot terms and postnational trends. A common multiculturalism links us all--call it Planet Hollywood, Planet Reebok, or the United Colors of Benetton...
>
> Kids in Perth and Prague and New Delhi are all tuning in to Santa Barbara on TV, and wriggling into -·-·->501 jeans,while singing along to Madonna's latest in English. CNN ...now reaches more than 140 countries; an American football championship pits London against Barcelona(p.86).

Yet, if our current generation of community college and other students (who will be in their 30s and 40s as we move into the 21st Century) do not grasp the full portent of these interconnections and don't discover ways to effectively function in this increasingly multicultural, interdependent world; they will become--as Jeff Brown of Global Education Associates once termed it: our "undeciders".

Recognizing this unprecedented challenge, need, and opportunity, some educators have issued calls and offered proposals for an enlarged international dimension, beginning in elementary schools and continuing through college. Such recommendations range from separate global education courses to enhancing traditional courses and giving better accounts of other cultures and countries. On the college level, for example, the National Governors Association has recommended ———→ that colleges should raise or reinstate their foreign language requirements; that geography should receive increased attention at all levels of education; that colleges should add courses in the cultures, the histories, and the economies of other nations; that teacher-education programs should include courses in international education; and that business schools should require their students to study the economic and business practices of other countries.

Today's students' lack of awareness of the global dimension in contemporary life nevertheless appears to remain profound if not overwhelming. One recent study of students, for example, pointed out that 49% of the students at one California college could not locate Japan on a map of the world.

A study at the University of North Carolina a few years ago concluded that 71% of the college students surveyed could not name one of the more than thirty African nations south of the Sahara. Another study showed that only 1,300 out of 70,000 American high schools had a formal global education component in their curriculum (i.e., instruction which included courses about intercultural and international affairs, world geography, and world history).

My own institution of Brookdale Community College similarly evidences such student limitations, for very few of our students seem to have done much critical thinking about global or even domestic issues. When asked about their views on global or national issues, they answer with clichés. Few of the students have much understanding of the difference between liberal and conservative views, between Democrats and Republicans, between Cuba and China, between South Africa and South America, Indians and Amerinds, between Iraq and Algeria.

Brookdale/Guayaquil: A Community College's Contribution to Global Education

In recognition of these serious deficits in information--and indeed, handicaps when functioning in our rapidly changing, interdependent world--we at Brookdale Community College (a suburban, county-sponsored institution which has over 170 faculty and more than 12,000 day and evening students) have sponsored for over nine years a college program in Ecuador's largest city of Guayaquil.

Unique in all of Ecuador, Brookdale offers in this city of some two million people a quality college-level program in English and Spanish to students who either wish to enhance their academic and occupational skills for use in their home-country or for those who wish to continue their studies at two- or four-year colleges States-side. For the latter group, the college prepares these students for the standards and instructional methods utilized by colleges in the United States.

Of equal importance, the Brookdale/Guayaquil campus (hereafter referred to as BCC/G) also gives students and faculty who wish to study or work abroad an opportunity to learn about Ecuadorian culture, history, and business. Instruction for those coming from the United States is provided in such diverse fields as business, political science,

and writing as well as general education courses in social studies, literature, and basic science and math. The program also maintains high academic standards so as to insure that credits from these courses are readily transferable to the New Jersey home-campus or to institutions such as the University of South Carolina (which has an articulation agreement with Brookdale).

Brookdale/Guayaquil was established by Dr. Albert C. Eyde, who in 1984 left his position as Brookdale's director of international education to become headmaster of the El Colegio Americano de Guayaquil, an accredited American school serving kindergarten through 12th-grade students.

Working with Brookdale, Eyde immediately starting developing college-level classes for U.S. students wishing to come to Ecuador for learning experiences as well as for Ecuadorian students who wished to study in the United States. That program consequently opened in Fall, 1985 in a former private residence which was broken up into classrooms.

Dr. Eyde now serves as director of Brookdale's programs in Ecuador. That program is currently housed in its own facility, with classrooms bearing the names of individuals who have served at the college in the past.

The Ecuadorian "campus" boasts an enrollment of approx-

imately 300 students per year, with some 250 local citizens and some forty to fifty North American students. About fifteen faculty members deliver the courses, with roughly 70% of these being U.S. educators and the other 30% ---> Ecuadorians who hold degrees from U.S. universities. North American faculty come from Brookdale's mainland campus and from the University of South Carolina/Columbia, and they participate on a rotating basis--typically spending one semester to one year in Ecuador.

Enrolled Latin American students can earn up to 45 semester-hours of credit at the BCC/G campus, and those wishing to earn an associate degree must complete the last 15 credits at Brookdale's New Jersey campus. Credits can also be transferred to the University of South Carolina, Edison State College of New Jersey, and other U.S.colleges who accept community college credits. Indeed, students typically attend colleges all over the United States; and so far, fifty Ecuadorian students have gone on to graduate from colleges and universities in the States.

North American students can also earn up to thirty credits in Ecuador, but most, according to Dr. Eyde, attend for only one semester and earn an average of fifteen credits.

BCC/G also serves as host to the "Partnership for Service Learning"; an international program for academic and

social service volunteers which is operated in Ecuador through Brookdale. About 150 students have gone through this project until now and they come from all over the United States to study and work in Guayaquil. Besides taking courses in Spanish-as-a-second-language at BCC/G, participants gain in-depth learning about Ecuadorian communities by living ----------> with local families, studying local cultures, and volunteering in community service and development projects. For example, students help build community centers, libraries, schools, houses, and latrines. They may also teach in local schools,provide health and child-care services, aid in recreational activities, care for the mentally retarded, work in child care centers, or work as assistants in adoption agencies.

The BCC/G program also provides outreach efforts. For example,BCC/G has over the years held a series of business management seminars for Ecuadorian industry leaders. Currently underway is yet another project designed to promote successful local businesses through a training-needs study. To that end, Brookdale has sent psychologists and business department representatives to survey everyone--employees and managers alike--in selected industrial organizations so as to assess the types of "inservice" programs they want and need.

Faculty members from Brookdale's New Jersey campus have also been coming to Ecuador to offer classes for elementary and secondary teachers so as to help strengthen the teachers' curriculum-development and teaching skills. Efforts are now also underway to expand this program and to do so by joining with other public and private Ecuadorian educational institutions in the region to offer expanded, ongoing courses in elementary and secondary education.

Of course, as with most schools, BCC/G feels the presence of an on-going lack of financial and other resources; particularly a lack of audio-visual equipment. The program does,however, obtain relatively small but regular financial support from its home-campus; and it works hard under rather challenging circumstances to recruit academically qualified local faculty as well as faculty from its own and other North American campuses (pp.24-26).

The positives outweigh any negatives at any rate, and BCC/G provides a critical educational resource for an important number of Ecuadorian as well as foreign students. Brookdale in turn is able to recruit good foreign students and faculty; and of possibly greatest importance, community college students and faculty in North America gain an all-too-rare opportunity to learn more about--and from--some of our global, interdependent, and multicultural neighbors to the south.

Globalism in the Classroom: Some Practical Examples

In many of its class-offerings, BCC/G enthusiastically attempts to address the concerns and needs of the global village and global interconnectedness. Consequently, after identifying and assessing the academic dimension of what the student wants, what he or she needs, and what he or she seems capable of, the program attempts to approach the student with an individualized as well as a group-oriented course that not only engages the student in relevant ideas, thinking, and analysis but also empowers him or her to become a more articulate and socially-responsible citizen of the world as well as of his or her community and nation.

With such broad objectives in mind, courses offered at BCC/G such as Introduction to World Politics requires members of the class to monitor contemporary Latin American and world events relevant to the current unit of study and to report on these observations at each class session. The students also hear from and interact with many guest-lecturers during the semester, and these may include public figures such as national legislators, local politicians, business-people, community activists, or ambassadors and foreign dignitaries. Debates are also held in these clases, with topics which include such themes as

U.S.-Ecuadorian relations, the pros and cons of NAFTA, drug trafficking, the socio-economic condition of the Cechua Indians, or the economic future of Latin America. The class may also role-play, with role-plays focussing on problems which are relevant to a given unit of study. Finally, the class may visit and be briefed at a local embassy, visit a factory, go to the offices of a government official, visit a local slum, or visit a local farm.

In any such activities, our students are encouraged to become intellectually and emotionally involved in their studies and experiences. They're being challenged to develop new awarenesses of and sensitivities to diversity in political, religious, economic, and ethnic life (controvertial as these sometimes may be). They're also being stimulated to think more critically, more creatively, more reflectively; to develop a greater sense of self-motivation and responsibility in an environment supportive of such attitudes; and to consider possible new academic → - - - → perspectives and aspirations.

Nor should the fact be overlooked that faculty-members participating in overseas programs such as Brookdale's can also gain some profound, real-life experiences in self-improvement as both teacher and citizen not really possible

by remaining on a States-side campus. With such an intellectually--and frequently, socially--enriching experience, the faculty-member may well come back to his or her home-campus more alert to new innovative and creative teaching techniques, to new cultural, political, and social diversities, to potential new institutional alliances, and to many of the same sensitivities thereafter enriching the lives of students having had such experiences abroad.

Globalism and the Challenge to the Community College

Of course, Brookdale is an example of a relatively successful overseas program which involves only a small number of students and faculty in one of the smallest of South American nations. In the bigger picture of today, a warning from the American Council on Education remains profoundly true; namely, that in spite of programs such as Brookdale/Guayaquil, there is a need to increase financial aid so that more students from all income levels can study abroad (including adult and part-time students); that there should be much more focus on study-abroad opportunities in the Third World and Pacific-rim nations than is now the case; that there should be an insistence on competancy in a second language as a requirement for a bachelor's degree; and ------> that there should

be a great infusion of the social sciences, the humanities, and other disciplines with international and multi-cultural perspectives (pp. 19-20).

It is abundantly clear that educational institutions K through 12 and those schools in all categories of higher education must evaluate and revise many of their on-campus and study-abroad efforts in light of a rapidly changing, interdependent, multicultural world that we all live in--and when all too frequently community college students and faculty seem to be left out of such considerations. Indeed, at the very time when the nation's number of community college students in generally increasing, such student and faculty participation remains relatively meagre in comparison to what currently is being done by institutions on the four-year level. In recognizing that the community college as an institution has some rather unique circumstances and hurtles in this regard (i.e., more time-, money-, and work-pressures than is to be found in many a four-year student counterpart), it nevertheless is hoped that the Brookdale/Guayaquil program can serve as one of a number of models that can be utilized by other community colleges throughout the nation so as to promote better student and faculty sensitivity to, understanding of, and positive dialogue and involvement with the needs of "interdependence", "multiculturalism", and "globalism".

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Conclusions

As a nation, we pay a very high price for the failure of our schools in general (including community colleges) to give their students an adequate education in national and global concerns. That low level of national and global awareness amongst all too many students does ———→ often create a low level of political participation, an unrealistically high level of political demands, and a general negativism and cynicism which is devoid of any positive or constructive thought/and action. All too many students in general as well as community college students in particular, moreover, treat national and global politics as a spectator sport and favor-seeking free-for-all rather than as a challenge, privilege, and an obligation to cooperate in an imperative search for sensible solutions to the many national and global problems which affect us all (pp. 7-8).

In light of this very negative and very urgent socio-political condition, international exchanges in education in general (including community college students and faculty) must become commonplace, for such exchanges can assist in no small measure to illuminate the many connections between real events in the world and the day-to-day lives and actions of our students and teachers. Rather

than requiring simply a recitation of facts and figures, such exchanges in general--as well as through the study of Political Science as one vehicle--encourage our (citizen) students and (citizen) teachers to think critically about the strengths, the weaknesses, and the problems of political, economic, and social systems of other nations as well as those of our own country.

American students--and students elsewhere--must be taught how nations compete with each other in the real world; how real, and not imaginary nations function in that world; and the how's and why's of the physical and human resources that promote the world's interdependence. American students and students elsewhere must ----------> be more selectively exposed to current foreign policy issues and to different interpretations of world events. Indeed, these considerations are fundamental for purposes of constructive dialogue and policy-making--if we are to be a truly democratic society.

Much of the world's current and future welfare rests, at least in part, on our nation raising the level of our students' (and teachers') social consciousness and international awareness. Consequently, those of us working in community colleges can specifically and uniquely assist in addressing these profound challenges; and our support of and sponsorship of international exchanges must be a limited but important part of that effort.

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